Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims replaces all prior versions and listings of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1.   (Currently Amended) A system to manage instant messages, the system comprising:

at least one processing device;

a storage storing instructions, which when implemented, cause the processing device to implement:

an input interface configured to receive instant messages created by or on behalf of one or more message sources for delivery to an intended recipient;

a degree of separation component configured to determine a degree of separation between the intended recipient and the message source, wherein the degree of separation indicates a number of intermediary relationships linking the intended recipient and the message source;

a screening component configured to:

identify, from among the received instant messages, qualifying instant messages that satisfy a capture rule, wherein the capture rule indicates that an instant message qualifies for capture if the degree of separation between the intended recipient and the message source exceeds a pre-determined threshold, and

capture as captured instant messages two or more of the qualifying instant messages; and

an output interface configured to inform the intended recipient unobtrusively of the captured instant messages and to enable the intended recipient to manage the captured instant messages.

2.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1 further comprising instructions that cause the processing device to implement a contact list of the intended recipient, wherein

the capture rule indicates that an instant message qualifies for capture if the message source of the instant message does not correspond to a contact of the contact list.

3.   (Cancelled).

4.   (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the capture rule indicates that an instant message qualifies for capture if the instant message is identifiable as an unsolicited marketing message.

5.   (Original) The system of claim 4 wherein the screening component is configured to determine whether the instant message comprises an unsolicited marketing message based on a heuristic method.

6.   (Original) The system of claim 4 wherein the screening component is configured to determine whether the instant message comprises an unsolicited marketing message based on a Bayesian method.

7.   (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the capture rule indicates that an instant message qualifies for capture if the intended recipient is indicated to be away.

8.   (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the capture rules indicates that all received instant messages are to be captured, ignored, or blocked.

9.   (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the output interface enables the intended recipient to respond to at least one of the captured instant messages.

10.   (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the output interface enables the intended recipient to delete at least one of the captured instant messages.

11.   (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the output interface enables the intended recipient to ignore or block at least one of the captured instant messages.

12.   (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the output interface enables the intended recipient for at least one of the captured instant messages to access information related to a message source associated with the captured instant message.

13.   (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the output interface enables the intended recipient to modify the capture rule based on at least one of the captured instant messages.

14.   (Original) The system of claim 13 wherein the output interface further enables the intended recipient to indicate that future instant messages from the source or sources of the at least one of the captured instant messages are not to be captured.

15.   (Original) The system of claim 13 wherein the output interface further enables the intended recipient to indicate that future instant messages from the source or sources of the at least one of the captured instant messages are to be blocked.

16.   (Currently Amended) The system of claim 15 further comprising <u>instructions that cause the processing device to implement</u> a blocking component that captures and deletes the future instant messages without presenting the future instant messages to the intended recipient.

17.   (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the output interface is configured to inform the intended recipient of the captured instant messages without stealing focus from another interface for each qualifying instant message that is captured.

18.   (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the output interface is configured to generate an unobtrusive audible or visible cue when at least one of the qualifying instant messages is captured.

19.   (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the output interface enables the user to organize the captured instant messages according to a plurality of predetermined categories.

20.   (Original) The system of claim 19 wherein the output interface is configured to inform the intended recipient of the captured instant messages according to the plurality of predetermined categories.

21.   (Original) The system of claim 19 wherein the predetermined categories include a category for captured instant messages received from message sources known to the intended recipient.

22.   (Original) The system of claim 19 wherein the predetermined categories include a category for captured instant messages received from message sources not known to the intended recipient.

23.   (Original) The system of claim 19 wherein the predetermined categories include a category for captured instant messages received from message sources trusted by the intended recipient.

24.   (Original) The system of claim 19 wherein the predetermined categories include a category for captured instant messages received from message sources not trusted by the intended recipient.

25.   (Original) The system of claim 1 wherein the screening component comprises:
    a rule engine configured to identify from among the received instant messages qualifying instant messages that satisfy the capture rule; and
    a capture engine configured to capture as captured instant message the two or more of the qualifying instant messages.

26.   (Currently Amended) ~~A computer storing program stored on a~~ A computer readable storage medium storing a computer program, ~~or a propagated signal,~~ the computer program comprising:

a degree of separation code segment that causes a computer to determine a degree of separation between the intended recipient and the message source, wherein the degree of separation indicates a number of intermediary relationships linking the intended recipient and the message source;

a screening code segment that causes a computer to identify, from among instant messages intended for a user, qualifying instant messages that satisfy a capture rule, and to capture as captured instant messages two or more of the qualifying instant messages, wherein the capture rule indicates that an instant message qualifies for capture if the degree of separation between the intended recipient and the message source exceeds a pre-determined threshold; and

an interface code segment that causes the computer to inform the user unobtrusively of the captured instant messages and to enable the user to manage the captured instant messages.

27.   (Currently Amended) The computer ~~program~~ medium of claim 26 further comprising a contacts code segment that causes the computer to access a contact list of the user, wherein the capture rule comprises a contacts parameter requiring capture if at least one source of an instant message does not correspond to a contact of the contact list.

28.   (Cancelled).

29.   (Currently Amended) The computer ~~program~~ medium of claim 26 wherein the capture rule comprises a SPAM parameter to control capture of an instant message identifiable as an unsolicited marketing message.

30.   (Currently Amended) The computer ~~program~~ medium of claim 26 wherein the capture rules comprises a do-not-disturb parameter to control whether all instant messages are to be captured, ignored, or blocked.

31. (Currently Amended) The computer ~~program~~ medium of claim 26 wherein the interface code segment further comprises a response code segment that causes the computer to enable the user to respond to at least one of the captured instant messages.

32. (Currently Amended) The computer ~~program~~ medium of claim 26 wherein the interface code segment further comprises a housekeeping code segment that causes the computer to enable the user to delete, ignore or block at least one of the captured instant messages.

33. (Currently Amended) The computer ~~program~~ medium of claim 26 wherein the interface code segment further comprises a query code segment that causes the computer to access information related to a message source of a captured instant message.

34. (Currently Amended) The computer ~~program~~ medium of claim 26 wherein the interface code segment further comprises a learning code segment that causes the computer to modify the capture rule based on at least one of the captured instant messages.

35. (Currently Amended) The computer ~~program~~ medium of claim 34 wherein the learning code segment further causes the computer to modify the capture rule based on a source of at least one of the captured instant messages.

36. (Currently Amended) The computer ~~program~~ medium of claim 26 wherein the interface code segment further includes a focus preservation code segment that causes the computer to inform the user of the captured instant messages without stealing focus from another interface for each qualifying instant message that is captured.

37. (Currently Amended) The computer ~~program~~ medium of claim 26 wherein the interface code segment further comprises an alert code segment that causes the computer to generate an unobtrusive audible or visible cue when at least one of the qualifying instant messages is captured.

38.   (Currently Amended) The computer ~~program~~ medium of claim 26 wherein the interface code segment further comprises an organization code segment that causes the computer to organize the captured instant messages according to a plurality of predetermined categories.

39.   (Currently Amended) The computer ~~program~~ medium of claim 38 wherein the predetermined categories include a category for captured instant messages of message sources trusted by the user.

40.   (Currently Amended) The computer ~~program~~ medium of claim 38 wherein the predetermined categories include a category for captured instant messages of message sources not trusted by the user.

41.   (Currently Amended) A computer-implemented method of managing instant messages, the method comprising:

receiving instant messages created by or on behalf of one or more message sources for delivery to a user;

determining a degree of separation between the intended recipient and the message source, wherein the degree of separation indicates a number of intermediary relationships linking the intended recipient and the message source;

identifying, from among the received instant messages, qualifying instant messages that satisfy a capture rule, wherein the capture rule indicates that an instant message qualifies for capture if the degree of separation between the intended recipient and the message source exceeds a pre-determined threshold;

capturing two or more of the qualifying instant messages; and

informing the user unobtrusively of the captured instant messages and enabling the user to manage the captured instant messages.

42.   (Original) The method of claim 41 wherein identifying qualifying instant messages that satisfy the capture rule includes identifying as qualifying instant messages

those messages in which at least one message source does not correspond to a designated contact of the user.

43. (Cancelled).

44. (Original) The method of claim 41 wherein identifying qualifying instant messages that satisfy the capture rule includes identifying unsolicited marketing messages as qualifying instant messages.

45. (Original) The method of claim 41 wherein identifying qualifying instant messages that satisfy the capture rule includes identifying all the received instant messages.

46. (Original) The method of claim 41 wherein informing the user unobtrusively of the captured instant messages includes informing the user of the captured instant messages without stealing focus from another interface for each qualifying instant message that is captured.

47. (Original) The method of claim 41 wherein informing the user unobtrusively of the captured instant messages includes generating an unobtrusive audible or visible cue when at least one of the qualifying instant messages is captured.

48. (Original) The method of claim 41 wherein enabling the user to manage the captured instant messages includes enabling the user to respond to at least one of the captured instant messages.

49. (Original) The method of claim 41 wherein enabling the user to manage the captured instant messages includes enabling the user to delete, ignore or block at least one of the captured instant messages.

50.   (Original) The method of claim 41 wherein enabling the user to manage the captured instant messages includes enabling the user to access information related to a message source of one of the captured instant message.

51.   (Original) The method of claim 41 wherein enabling the user to manage the captured instant messages includes enabling the user to modify the capture rule based on at least one of the captured instant messages.

52.   (Original) The method of claim 51 wherein enabling the user to manage the captured instant messages includes enabling the user to modify the capture rule based on a source of at least one of the captured instant messages.

53.   (Original) The method of claim 41 wherein enabling the user to manage the captured instant messages includes enabling the user to organize the captured instant messages according to a plurality of predetermined categories.

54.   (New) A system to manage instant messages, the system comprising:
at least one processing device;
a storage storing instructions, which when implemented, cause the processing device to implement:
an input interface configured to receive instant messages created by or on behalf of one or more message sources for delivery to an intended recipient that is logged into the instant messaging system;
a screening component configured to:
identify, from among the received instant messages while the intended recipient is logged into the instant messaging system, qualifying instant messages that satisfy a capture rule, wherein the capture rule indicates that an instant message qualifies for capture based on an online status of the intended recipient, and
capture as captured instant messages two or more of the qualifying instant messages; and

an output interface configured to inform the intended recipient unobtrusively of the captured instant messages and to enable the intended recipient to manage the captured instant messages.

55. (New) A computer-implemented method of managing instant messages, the method comprising:

receiving instant messages created by or on behalf of one or more message sources for delivery to a user;

identifying, from among the received instant messages, qualifying instant messages that satisfy a capture rule;

capturing two or more of the qualifying instant messages; and

presenting the user with a captured message interface that enables the user to:

view a list of all captured instant messages; and

select one instant message from the list of captured instant messages and respond to the selected captured instant message in a new instant messaging window.